

BIBLE STUDY METHODS

Studying the Bible: As Easy as ABC¹

To begin the ABC study, select the passage of Scripture you will study. It should not be more than one chapter—preferably it should be a section of a chapter. Read the passage a minimum of three times. Next, read the passage again and jot down your thoughts in a rough draft. Then organize under the following five sections, each identified by a letter of the alphabet.

A. A Title

You may want to write your title after you have finished the rest of your study. In choosing a title, jot down two or three titles that come to mind as you study; then either select the best one from the list or form a new one from a combination of your suggestions. The title should fit the chapter or passage and be as complete as possible. The title should identify the passage's content. Don't be concerned about being clever or catchy. The title can be as short as two words or as long as ten.

B. Best Verse or Basic Passage

Decide whether you are choosing a best verse or a basic passage. Write the reference of the verse or verses under the section heading. The best verse is a single reference that seems most outstanding to you as you read the passage or chapter—it does not have to include the central theme. The basic passage is a group of verses (no more than three) that includes the central message or is the key to the contents of the passage. You may want to write out the entire verse to help you memorize it.

C. Challenge

As you work through the passage or chapter, ask God to challenge you in a personal way from some portion of what you are studying. Your purpose now is to accept this challenge and apply its truth in a definite way to your life. It may be something that God wants you to do or stop doing, or an attitude to develop or get rid of. A habit may need to be formed or broken. You may need to incorporate some truth into your thinking.

Under the heading CHALLENGE, begin with the number of the verse or verses from which you are taking your challenge. First state in your own words the truth of the verse. Then tell how the challenge applies to you—what needs it reveals in your life, what shortcomings, transgressions, or neglects it indicates, or what new appreciation or understanding it opens up to you. Since the challenge is personal, use the pronouns “I,” “me,” “my,” and “mine” in your writing.

Next, state clearly what you plan to do about it. Tell what specific action you will take to correct the weakness, to build the needed quality into your life, or to increase your understanding of this truth. Choose something practical you can do during the following week, instead of something long-term. Remember to depend on the Holy Spirit, who ultimately enables us to grow in Christ.

D. Difficulties

Consider each verse in your study passage. Does it speak of anything you could not explain to another person? If so, under the heading DIFFICULTIES write down the number of the verse and the question or problem it raises in your mind. State the specific difficulty it presents to you. If a difficulty can be

¹ Studying the Bible: As Easy as ABC. Discipleship Journal, 83, 20-21, 1994.

answered by a little research (such as looking up a word in a dictionary), do the research and record the answer.

E. Essence

In the last section of your study, you may choose to summarize or outline the passage under the heading ESSENCE. In either case, you should record only what the passage says, not what it means. Rather than interpreting it, simply put in your own words what the scripture actually says.

The summary is a brief condensation of the passage. Summarize all the parts of the passage equally, not giving too much space to one part and slightly another. One way to do this is to write one sentence in your rough draft for each successive thought in the passage, using your own words instead of the words of the text. Then condense your summary into fewer words, combining your sentences and making them shorter. You should aim for an average of two to eight words per verse.

An outline divides the passage into its natural paragraphs and gives a brief title or heading to each section. Write down the verses included in each section. List as many subpoints under each of the main headings as you need to define its content. As in the summary, include all parts of the passage in good proportion.

Book	Colossians
Study Passage	3:1-11
A - A Title	The Christian's New Life
B – Best Verse	Col 3:3
C – Challenge	Verse: Col 3:2; Truth: My mind is too occupied with godly thoughts and desires, not wanting what the world has to offer. Application: It's easy to think I must have certain things or live a certain way in the world's eyes to be happy. The world's thinking gets to me. Then I get anxious when I don't get these things. This verse reminds me I need to set my mind to think God's way with God's values. This happens only as my mind is filled with His Word. I need to develop the habit of meditating on Scripture. This week I'll take one verse I have memorized and meditate on it all week. I'll use Col 3:2.
D - Difficulties	v. 1 – how have Christians been raised with Christ? What are the "things above" I am to seek? v. 2 – How do I "set" my mind? v. 5 – How can I "put to death" my earthly nature? Do I do this actively, or does God bring it about in my life? v. 10 – Why is it necessary to have my new nature "renewed in knowledge"?
E – Essence	The Christian's New Life I. Centered in Christ (1-4) A. Raised with Christ 1. Seek things above (1) 2. Set my mind on things above (2) B. Appearing with Christ 1. I have died—my life is hidden with Christ (3) 2. I will appear with Christ (4) II. Contrast of the old and new (5-11) A. Old

	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The old character—put it to death (5-6)2. Old practice—put them away (7-9)
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B. New

1. The new self-in God's image (10)

2. No partiality in Christ (11)